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Abridged Editions of Modern German Authors.

Freytag, Soll und Haben, adapted and annotated for school use by Hanby Crump.

(New York, Macmillan & Co. 1893).

Freytag, Soll und Haben, condensed from the original and edited with English notes for the use of American schools and colleges by Ida W. Bultmann.

(Boston, Ginn & Co., 1898).

Freytag, Soll und Haben, abridged and edited with introduction and notes by George T. Files.

(Boston, D. C. Heath & Co., 1901).

Freytag, Die verlorene Handschrift, edited with introduction and notes by Katherine M. Hewett.

(New York, The Macmillan Company, 1898).

Scheffel, Der Trompeter von Säckingen, abridged and edited with introduction and notes by Carla Wenckebach.

(Boston, D. C. Heath & Co., 1895).

Scheffel, Ekkehard, abbreviated and edited with English notes by Carla Wenckebach.

(Boston, D. C. Heath & Co., 1894).

Rosegger, Die Schriften des Waldschulmeisters, abridged, with introduction and notes, by Lawrence Fossler.

(New York, Henry Holt & Co., 1899).

Hauff, Lichtenstein, abridged and edited with introduction and notes by Frank Vogel.

(Boston, D. C. Heath & Co., 1901).

Dahn, Ein Kampf um Rom, episodes arranged to form a continuous narrative and edited with notes by Carla Wenckebach.

(Boston, D. C. Heath & Co., 1900).

Sudermann, Der Katzensteg, abridged and edited by Benjamin W. Wells.

(Boston, D. C. Heath & Co., 1899).

Sudermann, Frau Sorge, with introduction and notes by Gustav Gruener.

(New York, Henry Holt & Co., 1900).

The desire of rendering some of the masterworks of modern German literature better adapted in size to the requirements of reading-texts in college and high school classes has been the

cause, that a number of such works have been published within the last few years in more or less abridged form. The opportunity of making use of these texts certainly is a most welcome one among instructors of German who have felt the need of them in past years.

It is true there have been voices raised now and then against such abridged texts—but without entering upon this question now,—we are placed before the alternative: is it better for our students to know nothing whatever of those authors, or to be made acquainted with a fair portion of these standard works, which may be the guide to a more intimate acquaintance with them? And how about the publisher? Would he be likely to issue a complete edition, e. g., of *Soll und Haben* or *Lichtenstein* with notes, whereby he would probably lose money? Or would even a small percentage of our students purchase the expensive German editions of these authors?

The writer had occasion to use some of these texts in his classes and in this way was led to investigate the various editors' methods of abridging more closely and critically.

There are two distinct methods of procedure, one, the cutting out of passages throughout the text, according to the pleasure of the editor, the other, the omission of entire episodes without touching the remainder of the narrative to any perceptible extent. Of these two methods, the latter seems to be more rational and, perhaps, the easier one, too, while the former involves far greater difficulties and pitfalls and thus leads more frequently to injustice to the author and his original plan.

We do not mean to include in our present observations the occasional expurgation of reading-texts intended for class use, because no one will question the necessity of that.

But there are novels—and dramas—of recent date, in which the over-emotional and sensual is not a mere technical means, but the leading agent to bring about complications and catastrophes. This, as it appears, almost inevitable feature of the *fin de siècle* realistic or naturalistic novels renders their use as text-books extremely difficult even where there are no mixed classes. Omitting these objectionable features may then rightly be considered no longer a mere expurgation, but turn out to be an interference with the author's original plan, as we shall try to point out later.

Considering Freytag first we must acknowledge that the two

above mentioned novels are rather voluminous and that only a radical shortening could render them convenient for class use. In judging the abridged edition of *Die verlorene Handschrift* we are especially willing to make all due allowances in view of the extreme difficulties of the task. In the abridged edition we find all that part of the novel which relates to the hostile neighbors and their families cut out. Indeed, the principal thread of the story remains intact, we are enabled to accompany the professor on his vain search, in the course of which he finds not the manuscript, but a more precious treasure, his future wife. We see further, how only affairs of a most threatening turn gradually teach him that the living treasure obtained there in the flesh and blood is far greater and far more worthy of his devotion than the imaginary manuscript which finally becomes such a welcome weapon in the hands of his adversary and nearly the ruin of her and himself. Nevertheless, many may regret that the delightfully humorous chapters and the incidents relating to *Hummel* and *Hahn*, to *Fritz* and *Laura* are withheld from the reader. The editor says in the introduction in reference to *Hummel* and *Hahn* that *their adventures are only remotely connected with the principal narrative*, yet, in chap. 18, *Herr Hummel* appears at a most critical juncture in the principal story as does another, so far unknown person, the *Herr Oberamtmann*—who, by the way, is not necessarily, as the note says, the administrator or superintendent of a royal domain, but more often the lease-holder of a country estate or “domain” owned by the state or a province or the sovereign. Thus the serious difficulty of abridging becomes evident when, as here, persons appear not only in what is largely episodic in character, but take a hand also in the development of the principal story.

Of Freytag's *Soll und Haben* we have several abridged editions, the oldest dating from 1893. For the sake of contrast, it may be not without interest to take this older edition into consideration, too. In *Soll und Haben*, as in *Die verlorene Handschrift* we find two distinct groups of acting persons, the aristocratic and the *Bourgeois*, the latter again subdivided into the old-fashioned, stately and rigidly honest class of merchants, on the one hand, and the unscrupulous, mostly Jewish gang of speculators and money lenders, on the other. These groups and cliques with all their outward differences and inward abhorrence of each other are by

chance or force of circumstances brought into contact with each other; the author's plot is made to rest entirely upon these contrasts and contacts, so that the elimination of any of these groups would do violence to Freytag's real designs and, besides, rob the story of much that is significant as well as attractive. In the older edition, however,, the reduction in size is consummated by dropping that group of Jewish sharpers and a great deal of minor detail without bestowing always sufficient care upon establishing at least some sort of connection in place of the omissions. The results, apart from the loss of essential portions of the original novel, are occasional obscurities and crowding together of events which should, at least, be pointed out as farther apart from each other, while a few persons are also made to appear like meteors to disappear as swiftly.

To what absurdities such careless abridging may lead, is well illustrated by this edition of *Soll und Haben* by Hanby Crump; a few instances will show.

On p. 54 at the close of Chap. 16 the last five lines are made to run as follows:

Anton arbeitete den Tag über wie Einer, der sich betäuben will, sprach nur das Nötige und ging am Abend trotzig die drei Treppen hinauf, sich anzukleiden, als ein Mann, der seinen Entschluss gefasst hat. Vertraue mir, sagte Anton, ich werde ruhig sein.

The reader is expected to guess whom Anton is addressing with these remarks. The meeting with his friend and the intervening part of the conversation are dropped without ceremony.

On p. 61. l. 36 we read:

Das Billet hatte keine Unterschrift, es war von Rosalie. Sabine wusste, wer die Schreiberin war.

But the reader would like to share her knowledge as Rosalie appears here for the first time and will not appear again. The note and its contents are thus without any meaning whatever.

The edition of *Soll und Haben* by Ida W. Bultmann is far superior to the one just spoken of. The editor accomplishes the abridgement in a rational and sympathetic way, not by eliminating entire groups of acting persons, but by judicious epitomizing of certain portions, and of just those which come nearest to permitting their treatment as episodes, thus e. g. Anton's expedition into

rebellious Poland, or the account of Anton's laborious and perilous activity as the baron's general agent and overseer, of which a considerable portion has been dropped.

One might wish, however, that the epitomized passages were in some way noticeable to the eye, by being printed in italics or enclosed in brackets or the like.

The edition of *Soll und Haben* by George T. Files though proceeding differently in detail, accomplishes its purpose likewise in a commendable way. As the editor says in the preface, he "has pursued the plan of following out the incidents connected with the life of the hero, Anton, and those most intimately associated with him. Some characters and incidents have been entirely omitted. . . . A brief summary of these events is given in the notes; otherwise they have been carefully avoided."

Still, the critical reader may find occasion to note some slight inaccuracies.

The relations between Anton and Lenore previous to his stay at the Polish estate as far as they are discernible from the abridged edition hardly justify the statement on p. 75 l. 15 f:

Mit Entzücken hörte Anton den Namen, an welchen sich für ihn so holde Erinnerungen knüpften.

or Lenore's action as told on p. 116, l. 28-30.

It seems to me also as if the account of the final settlement of the love-affair between Lenore and Fink would call out some inquiry concerning the meaning of p. 219, l. 23-25 and p. 220, l. 30-33.

But we must not be too severe; every abridged edition will show such deficiencies and, above all, unevenly balanced portions of the original.

Of Scheffel's *Trompeter von Säckingen* as well as of the same author's *Ekkehard* we find both kinds of editions, abridged and unabridged. Why the former, the *Trompeter*, should be at all reduced in size, seems incomprehensible even though the chapter relating to the *Erdmännleins Höhle* must seem rather obscure to the average foreign reader and would not be missed if left out. There is no apparent justification for any more abridging, such as has been done in the edition by Carla Wenckebach. The unabridged edition by Ida Frost—though very defective as regards correctness of print and notes—has been found

well adapted for class use as regards size.

With reference to *Ekkehard* the question appears well worth debating. In this novel there is much that is of interest merely as historical or antiquarian subject-matter and without influence upon the actual story, though the chief characters may have some loose connection with it. For these reasons, the very commendable abridged edition by Carla Wenckebach may be preferred by some instructors, while others will assert that the excellent unabridged edition by William Herbert Carruth is not too formidable in size and, with judicious management, can be gone over within a single term.

A far easier task, apparently, has been the editing of Rosegger's *Die Schriften des Waldschulmeisters* in a shape better suited for reading in class. Since the entire work—as far as the *Waldschulmeister* is speaking himself—consists of loosely connected sketches in the form of a diary, it seems a perfectly legitimate proceeding to omit some or portions of some. The editor's course in preparing this abridged edition is deserving due appreciation.

During the past year two more romantic novels of high standing have been edited in abridged editions: Dahn's *Ein Kampf um Rom* and Hauff's *Lichtenstein*. A novel of the formidable size of *Ein Kampf um Rom* is of course unfit for class use as it is. It is like a series of semi-historical sketches showing first the Ostrogoths at the height of power and then depicting their swift decline and final annihilation. The abbreviated edition which gives only about one-third of the entire work, claims under the title of *Ein Kampf um Rom* to be "Episodes arranged to form a continuous narrative." This title though corresponding with the facts, might mislead people to the belief that they are possessing in the abridged edition the entire novel from start to finish, outside of certain omitted portions. As a matter of fact, however, but little of the actual struggle for the possession of Rome is contained in the selections given unless one considers the secret plotting of the fictitious Cethegus as a long drawn-out *Kampf um Rom*. Thus not only the outcome of this grand struggle, the fate of Cethegus and other chief characters remain a mystery, but even all those fine chapters describing the heroic resistance of the Goths against the combined onslaughts

from Byzantium and Rome, so well suited to our own new conceptions of a strenuous life, are withheld. It is surely a mistake to give only the inception of a grand struggle and not its progress and final outcome. It seems to me that the only legitimate way of abridging in this case would have been a collection of the various passages describing the actual fighting crowned with the dramatic, almost operatic departure of the surviving remnant of an once powerful tribe.

As we now approach the abridged edition of *Lichtenstein* by Frank Vogel, it cannot be said that we do this with great satisfaction. It seems a pity that this romantic gem, a poem in prose, should be subjected to such a treatment. However, since it has been considered desirable, as the editor states in his preface, to render this novel available for class-use by abridging it, we will accept his apology and examine what has become of this beloved novel of our boyhood.

Finding no episodes of considerable length the editor had to accomplish his task by the eliminating of single passages throughout the work; but even if that is done with the greatest caution, it seems almost impossible to give the reader a correct idea of the author's full worth. Still, if we place ourselves in the attitude of one unfamiliar with the original *Lichtenstein*, we are ready to acknowledge that the abridged story, on the whole, runs along smoothly enough. Nevertheless, it seems to have undergone, now and then, too radical a cutting, thus in the first chapter p. 3 and 4, compare e. g. the passage l 17-20 on p. 4 in the abridged edition:

Hinter den beiden Mädchen stand ein grosser bejahrter Mann, dessen ganz schwarzer Anzug wunderbarlich gegen die reichen bunten Farben um ihn her abstach.

with the original:

Hinter... Mann; seine tiefen strengen Züge, seine buschigen Augenbrauen, sein langer dünner, schon ins Graue spielender Bart, selbst sein ganz schwarzer Anzug, der..... abstach, gaben ihm ein ernstes beinahe trauriges Aussehen, das kaum ein wenig milder wurde.....

The description of the two young girls and of Frondsberg seems likewise too brief and incomplete as compared with the original. Sometimes, the omission of a few lines perverts the

author's original meaning. To prove this, one may compare on p. 13, l. 12 and 13:

Ist der Vater auf feindlicher Seite, kann Marie möglicherweise noch in jenen Mauern sein?

which reads like two separate questions while in the original the former is a conditional clause:

.....*Und ist der Vater*.....

The passage on p. 25, l. 23:

Er zog die Gardinen vor und liess die Bilder des vergangenen Tages an seiner Seele vorüberziehen.

will be understood as relating to the window-curtains and sound very commonplace, while the comparison with the original will show their real significance; that Georg went to bed and drew the bed-curtains and gave himself over to dreams, cannot be guessed from the fragments given.

On p. 45 l. 20-25....*die Lücken der Laube*; this arbor has never been mentioned before.

On p. 55, l. 7, the omission of *den Grenzmauern von Württemberg* after *nach den fernen blauen Bergen* seems unfortunate, because only these appositional words explain....*Sehnsucht oder stillem Gram*.

On p. 58 we are lead to infer that the conversation between Marie and the peasant took place in the church which would be unbecoming.

Why is the clause *als man sie noch....gehen lehrte* omitted after...*habe das Fräulein noch gekannt?*

It seems also regrettable that the historical and descriptive passages have been reduced to such an extent as to lose almost all value; thus e. g. on p. 12 the enumeration of the conditions tending to war, on p. 13 omission of passage describing the position of the enemies of the Duke; on p. 12 the mention of the 14000 *Schweizer* should not have been eliminated. The description of some parts of the city of Ulm on p. 13, of the beautiful view from the summit on p. 82, after l. 8, of the castle of Lichtenstein on p. 131, toward the end of the chapter might have been retained.

We leave now, before closing, the field of romantic fiction and turn to the two remaining novels, Sudermann's *Katzensteg* and *Frau Sorge*. Sudermann is the most popular representative

of that group of young German poets whom we characterize as naturalists and who owe a great deal in the way of methods, mannerism and inspiration to Zola, Dostojewski, Tolstoi and Ibsen. We alluded to some of the qualities of this kind of literature in our introductory remarks, and it was pointed out how ill-suited those works must necessarily appear as reading-texts for class-use.

No exception in this respect can be made with reference to Sudermann. His works as they are, can hardly be commended to young people as fit reading-matter. Of the two, the *Katzensteg* abounds more with these objectionable features, and most of the abridging done also meant expurgating. It is necessary to review briefly the original work in order to obtain a correct judgment regarding the abridged edition. During the conquest of Prussia by Napoleon in the unfortunate years of 1806 and 1807 a nobleman of Polish descent has betrayed a body of Prussian troops to the enemy by guiding the latter over a secret path and bridge, the *Katzensteg*, thus causing the slaughter of nearly all the Prussians. Ever since this base deed he has had to shut himself up in his castle to escape the persecution of the villagers, protected himself by secret mines, traps, spring-guns and an entire arsenal of arms of every description, having as his sole companion a luckless peasant girl, a tenant's daughter, whom he has compelled to serve as the actual guide on that treacherous errand. His son who is the central figure in the novel, has been absent from home, during this time, attending school; on hearing, perchance, of his father's rascality, he continues to stay away from home and, a few years later, enters the Prussian army under an assumed name, takes part in the war of liberation with honor and at its close, returns to his native home only to learn of the terrible state of affairs prevailing there. He hastens on to his father's castle which he finds a half-burned ruin and in the park he meets the girl digging a grave for his father who has just died. Now begins his hopeless struggle against the villagers who are determined to treat him like his father and to prevent any one from working for him or having anything to do with him. He is firmly convinced that his past career in the war entitles him to honorable treatment and is resolved to force the villagers to grant it to him offering, at the same time, an atonement for his

father's crime through his own sufferings. The author succeeds in chaining the reader's attention throughout the various incidents of this struggle however exaggerated and even implausible the entire matter must appear. The single bright spot is the growing attachment of that same uncultured creature, the accomplice of the father, to her young master, but even that is tainted by the latter's final yielding to the baser impulses of the blood. The blame must rest wholly with him, since the half animal-like girl is a mere tool in his hands. With this downfall he seals his fate and hers; while, up to this, we have been looking upon them as martyrs—even if in a hopeless cause—we feel now that their destruction can only be a question of time and the only possible atonement.

If we now examine the abridged edition, we must admit that the object for which it is intended made not only the elimination of much of the detail necessary, but it also required the omission of what Sudermann himself must have considered the most consequential event in his hero's self-destructive course i. e. his illicit intimacy with the peasant-girl. In its abridged state, therefore, the story is thrown out of balance; the final annihilation of the two principal persons is a most unjust one: the young man does no wrong whatever, and even the girl we would fain exonerate from any blame for her participation in that infamous treachery, considering her untutored, half-savage nature and the compulsion under which she was acting. The attitude of the old parson becomes a farce: his dramatic charge of the young man with the responsibility for the girl's salvation and the final cursing of him become a blasphemy in the mouth of one whose mission is to be one of justice and mercy, for, as it appears in the abridged edition, the young man is the only one person who respects her; who shields her from the villainous assaults of the entire village and her own father; in whose home she finds her sole place of safety; and whom she worships with the blind loyalty born of awe and love. The murder of the girl, then, under most horrible circumstances, just when she seems to be raised to a loftier conception of herself and her destination, is turned into a revolting sneer upon justice and retribution. If this were to be accepted as a typical work of Sudermann, those who call him an ultra-pessimist, could not be contradicted. The assertion of

the editor in the preface:

The reduction has been made by abbreviating or omitting descriptions and episodes of minor consequence so that the story remains complete and continuous.

cannot be accepted as valid regarding all of his omissions though here, as in other cases, we are willing to make all due allowance in view of the difficulty of the problem. If this novel had to be edited for class-reading—we may repeat again—the omission of the one vital portion of which we have just spoken, could not be avoided.

Frau Sorge, the earliest novel of consequence that Sudermann wrote, is also now before us in a slightly shortened edition. Even the severest critics of the author admit the originality and power of *Frau Sorge* which, fortunately, is largely drawn from actual life and shows only occasional leanings toward the sensational, the mere theatrical and the sensual, all of which is so prevalent in Sudermann's later works.

The editor tells us in the preface:

To make the text available for general class-use it has been deemed best to cut out one rather long episode which seemed neither an essential or an artistic feature of the story as a whole.

The author's plan is to describe the trials which a young man has to undergo at whose cradle *Frau Sorge* has sat. These trials are indeed too many for a mortal creature to bear, and the American editor did wisely when he decided to lighten the poor young man's burden and to cut out the long drawn-out account of the hard labors and humiliations which fell to his share, when he appeared as the champion of his twin-sisters and finally forced their faithless lovers to make them their wives. With most readers, it seems to me, the judgment concerning the author would not be altered for the better if this passage were not omitted. Outside of this one lengthy episode of nearly 40 pages only a few lines have been omitted on p. 9, merely for aesthetic reasons.

From the fore-going remarks our own opinion regarding abridging will have become sufficiently clear; if a work contains numerous passages or portions of an episodic character, judicious elimination of some of them will not impair the actual value of

the work in question as a narrative; if, however, the abridging is accomplished by a mere haphazard sort of "boiling down," it is very difficult to avoid being unjust to the author's design and style. It has also become evident that some works ought never to be subjected to any such process.

Of all the modern German authors Ebers seems to me to be best adapted to be edited in abridged editions, and it is singular that none of his novels has as yet been prepared for class-use in that form.

CARL OSTHAUS.

The University of Indiana.

Goethe's Poems.—Selected and edited with introduction and notes by Julius Goebel, Professor of Germanic Philology and Literature in Stanford University. New York. Henry Holt and Company, 1901. pp. xix, 244.

By his contributions to the *Goethe Jahrbücher*, *Modern Language Notes*, *Festgaben*, etc., as well as by his public and university lectures, Dr. Goebel has established his reputation as a Goethe scholar. The appearance of a collection of Goethe's poems bearing his name as editor is calculated therefore to attract general attention and to arouse the special interest of all who may be engaged in the study and interpretation of the life and writings of the great poet. The book before us is a remarkable one both for what it omits and what it gives. One will look in vain for explanations of ethical datives and accusatives of extent of time, neither are the notes filled with smooth English translations of difficult passages in the text. In fact a very short perusal is sufficient to show that the book is not intended to serve as a stepping-stone toward the mastery of the German language, nor even as a *Blumenlese* of Goethe's shorter poems for the delight of the lover of poetry. It is rather designed as the editor himself declares at the outset "as an introduction to the study of Goethe by showing as far as possible the inner development of the poet and the man which are inseparable in this greatest lyric poet of modern times." This is the keynote of the whole book—Goethe the poet and Goethe the man; his inward growth, vicissitudes and development.